

# [Comparative essay on lamb to the slaughter and the speckled band essay](https://assignbuster.com/comparative-essay-on-lamb-to-the-slaughter-and-the-speckled-band-essay/)

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The following essay is going to compare `Lamb to the Slaughter`; a modern murder mystery to a more stereotypical one; `The Speckled Band`. `Lamb to the Slaughter` was written by Rohl Dahl in 1954, this means he has added newer ideas into his short story such as a woman murderer. Whereas Sir Arthur Conan Doyle wrote `The Speckled Band` in 1892 and has used a more traditional manner by using a callous man as the killer. `Lamb to the Slaughter` is about a pregnant woman who the reader assumes is innocent and gentle. Later on in the story, the husband announces he wants a divorce. This aggravates the wife, therefore she hits him over the head with a piece of frozen lamb.

He dies instantly. Some lazy and poor detectives come to the house to review the case but Mary (the wife) is too cunning for the lousy policeman. In the concluding paragraph of the story, Mary has fed the police officers the lamb so all evidence is erased. `The Specked Band` has a contrasting story line in many ways. The story is opened with Watson (the Main detective’s sidekick) revealing what a strange murder mystery it is.

A woman named Helen comes to see Sherlock Holmes and Watson. She tells a story of her sister and how she suddenly dies. The sister started to hear whistling noises at night until one evening, Helen was woken up with her sister’s piercing scream. Helen ran into Julia’s room where she lay, tranquil and pointing towards their father’s room whispering the words `specked band` with her last breath. This happened just before Julia was going to get married.

Now Helen was engaged, and her dad had moved her into her sister’s room. She too was hearing whistling at night. Sherlock asked about the father. Helen described him as violent as when he lived in India he killed his butler and also he always argued with his neighbours. With this much information, Sherlock wanted to go and inspect the house.

They find a fake bell pull and vent; this was enough information for Sherlock to know that it is a snake that killed Helen’s sister. Doctor Roylett, their dad was the murderer. There are distinctions with the stories straight away as they both have different moods in the opening. `Lamb to the slaughter` begins with a happy, homely mood. Rohl Dahl has created this by using phrases such as `The room was warm and clean. and `Blissful time of day`.

These sentences represent a mood where you do not expect crime to occur, however in `The Speckled Band` you anticipate a murder. It is opened by Watson informing the readers what a strange and unusual story it is. This is shown in the first paragraph saying things such as `Of all the varied cases, however, I cannot recall any which presented more singular and absurd features. ` Also Watson describes how it was unusual as Sherlock woke him up early, which was abnormal. These quotes prepare the reader for what is to come unlike the ones for `Lamb to the Slaughter`.

I feel that `The Speckled Band` has a more appealing beginning. I have this view as it builds up tension more quickly; they do this by revealing information about the crime near the start so the reader has a reason to carry on reading. While `Lamb to the Slaughter` does not have as much pressure as it is a happier and calmer mood. Just like the opening, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s villain is more stereotypical. I think this as he looks mean and dangerous. I know Dr Roylott looks like a murderer as he is described to `have a large face, seared with a thousand wrinkles burned yellow with the sun.

This shows me he is angry as people with a large amount of wrinkles frown a lot. Also he is very strong, this is shown when he `seized the poker, and bent it into a curve with his huge brown hands. ` I do not think that Roald Dahl has used a cliched murderer; Mary Maloney is very different to Dr Roylett. The most obvious reason is Mary is a woman.

Also she is pregnant and `the mouth was soft, and the eyes with their new placid look. ` This creates an image of a pretty, calm woman. Also Dr Roylott is more stereotypical as he has a foul behavior. The author has shown this when Helen says `Last week he hurled the local blacksmith into a stream. ` This shows his violent side, also when the quote is used; `screamed the old man furiously. ` This illustrates his lack of patience.

Mary Maloney’s behavior is dissimilar. She acts timid and obedient towards her husband. I think this because of sayings such as `She would glance up at the clock, but without anxiety, merely to please herself that each minute gone by made it nearer the time he would come. ` This makes the reader believe she loves her husband very much.

She also comes across as kind because she is sewing and makes her husband a drink. Both murderers are similar in the means that they both have motives. Mary’s motive is anger because her husband wanted a divorce. Dr Roylott’s cause for violence was money; as, if his daughters got married he would have to give them money. I know this because in the beginning of the story, Helen states ` a certain annual sum should be allowed to each of us in the event of our marriage`. But on the other hand, the killers are diverse as Dr Roylett planned his murder very carefully but Mary killed her husband spontaneously.

The violence of the crash, the noise, the small table overturning, helped bring her out of shock. `This shows she did not plan it, as if she was expecting it she would not go into shock. I think the reader always predicts that Dr Roylett could be capable of crime right from the start, but I think that Mary Maloney is first portrayed very innocent so it is harder to think of her as a murderer. I think that Dr Roylett could easily be suspected as a murderer because of lines such as `he would indulge in ferocious quarrels with whoever might cover his path.

This shows he has a shortage of patience and was known to be violent. Dr Roylott died from his attempt of murder, so he was not victorious. Mary Maloney is the most successful villain as she was not arrested for her crime, although I think this could be because of the quality of detectives in the different stories. Also I think Mary Maloney is a more complex character because she shows an affectionate side in the story and also a manipulative side. The calm side is shown by using words such as `darling`. This shows her intimate side; also stereotypical murderers are not expected to use pet names.

The woman practices how to talk to the shop keeper in the mirror, this shows she is manipulative as she is planning to be false and two faced. Dr Roylett is not as complex because he only shows an angry personality. But he is more controlling, all his neighbors and contacts are scared of him. Although on the other side Mary is also able to control but not through fear, but manipulation. When readers read `The Speckled Band`, I think their attitude is always against Dr Roylett.

Whereas feelings can change towards Mary. Places where emotions alter for the wife is at the start when the husband breaks up with her. Some sympathy can be shared for her, but when she murders him she turns into a `baddie` by using phrases like `All right I’ve killed him. ` This shows she does not fell bad. A similarity between the murderers is the lack of private thoughts the writer shows of the murderers.

But a vast difference is the sex of the villains. But I think this is hardly surprising as Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s story is a lot older. This means that back then it was probably known as improper to have a female killer. People in the past would likely to be disgusted to read about a female villain, as back then a woman was known as innocent and obedient.

I think Roald Dahl’s book is a sign of the times. I have shown above that the villains have very different aspects about them, as do the detectives. Sherlock Holmes is very passionate about his job; I know this because at the start Dr Watson states that he will only do strange and interesting cases. This shows us that he is not doing it for the money. He also shows this when Catherine says `At present it is out of my power to reward you for your services. ` Yet he does the case anyway.

Sherlock Holmes is also the more stereotypical detective. I think this as he uses traditional equipment such as magnifying glass to search for clues. Roald Dahl’s detectives use apparatus like `police photographers`. Sherlock Holmes solves his crime by using deduction. In contrast; Jack Noonan trusts one alibi and does not thoroughly go through evidence. I feel that Noonan acted unprofessionally because he offers to let Mary stay with his wife.

This is unethical as you should not get close to suspects. Whereas Sherlock Holmes acted professionally because he did not jump to conclusions. I know this as he does not tell Helen what had happened till right at the end even though he had started to make his mind up much before.`I believe Mr. Holmes, that you have already made up your mind`.

Helen said earlier on in the story. I think there are many reasons why Sherlock does solve the case but Jack Noonan does not. It could be as Mary is a better villain, although I do not think this. I feel that Holmes has a better method because he studies everything and does not assume. Jack Noonan is more believable and is a standard detective of the time.

Sherlock Holmes appears to have super-human thinking and notices everything. I think they are different like this because in 1892 Sherlock Holmes needed to be very clever and unique or people would not be very interested. In 1952 it was more acceptable to have normal people in the stories and not be a hero. I think another reason why Holmes solved the murder mystery is because it is based on Holmes and the reader wants him to solve the mystery, but ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ is based on Mary Maloney who committed the crime, and the reader may want Mary to get away with it. These two different things happen because the authors persuaded the reader to want the main character of their story to succeed.

`Lamb to the slaughter` is set in recent times and a place where a murder is not expected to occur; a house. This is unusual as it is a very warm, homely house; this is shown by the sewing and the loving couple that live in it. This atmosphere probably helped secure her alibi. On the opposing side, `The Speckled Band` is set in the 19th century. This is shown in the language when phrases are used such as `You may advise me how to walk amid the dangers which encompass me. ` This would rarely be found in modern books.

Also, a bigger clue is when the author wrote that Helen rode on a dogcart. It is set in a large mansion; this is very stereotypical for a murder story. I think this is because the house is old so it has a history; this is chilling and is very common in the criteria of a classic murder mystery. Evidence that `Lamb to the Slaughter` is set in the 1900’s is also the language. An example of this is that slang is used; `Hullo`.

But signs can also be found in the detective’s method as a photographer is used. I think that ‘ the Speckled Band’ is written in `proper English` and with a lot more description as the attitude of his time was that writers are intellectual and this should be reflected in their stories by close detail. This is also shown as his sentences are a lot longer with dense information given in them. I can confirm this with the first sentence of each story. `The Speckled Band’s` first sentence is 78 words long whereas `Lamb to the Slaughter’s` was merely 38. Also Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s writing uses similes and metaphors such as `her whole figure swaying to and fro like that of a drunkard.

` where as Roald Dahl’s does not. I think another reason why Conan Doyle’s story is more intense is because his story is meant to be taken more seriously that that of Roald Dahl’s. This is shown in various parts of the story such as at the beginning when Sherlock is talking to Holmes, he does not talk in slang to his friend; `A client, It seems that a young lady has arrived in a considerable state of excitement. ` While on the contrary, the reader can smile and laugh in places of `Lamb to the Slaughter. ` An example of this is at the closing stages of the story when one of the detectives says `The evidence is probably right under our noses.

What you think, Jack? ` While they are eating the lamb that killed the husband. ‘ I have explained the differences between the styles of writing, but there are also similarities. These include a lot of speech and description on the surroundings. An example of this from `Lamb to the Slaughter` is on the first page; `holding the tall glass with both hands, rock it so the ice cubes tinkled against the side. ` And from `The Speckled Band` a quote I found; `On the table stood a dark lantern with the shutter half open, throwing a brilliant beam of light upon the iron safe.

` These are both specific. The characters also speak with different uses of language. Sherlock Holmes’ speech is very confident and correct which once again shows the reader his super-human powers. Also the speech helps the reader to grow on him as he comes across as a gentlemen and an ideal Victorian (which was very important in the 19th century).

Whereas Mary uses her language differently, she uses it to manipulate. This is illustrated in the scene when Mary is convincing Jack to have a whisky; `Why don’t you have one yourself, you must be awfully tired. Please do. You’ve been very good to me.

` Her speech is very innocent and deceiving. I think that both settings effect the reader’s response but in a different ways. In `Lamb to the Slaughter` the reader will react surprised, as it is not a stereotypical setting. In contrast, the readers of `The Speckled Band` will know that something bad will occur but there will be suspense as they will be waiting for it.

Factors that make stories successful include the plot and structure. `Lamb to the Slaughter` is written as it happens; this is effective as it makes the reader feel that they are there. `The Speckled Band` is written in the first person (Watson), this is effective as all the questions we are wondering are answered for us. This is very important as Sherlock Holmes brain does not work the same as an average person’s would therefore it would be hard for us to follow. Also the stories are different because the plot of `The Speckled Band` is based on the stereotypical story line `who done it? ‘ where they are looking for the murderer.

On the contrary, `Lamb to the Slaughter` is about `will she get caught? `. This is not as common because it does not grasp the reader as much. `The Speckled Band` is significantly longer but that is because the story line is a lot more complicated. But this does not matter as the reader is kept interested by being given clues through the story. An example of a clue is when Sherlock finds the phoney bell pull but does not explain why it is there. ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ does not leave any clues as we already know who the murderer is and how they were killed.

Another way that the writer’s styles differ is the use of flashbacks. Sir Arthur Conan Doyle does use them in his writing, two occasions of this is at the start when Helen is explaining about the incident with her sister and also at the end when Sherlock is explaining how he solved the mystery. I think this is just one of the ways that Sir Arthur Conan Doyle makes his story more gripping, along with clues and the chronological structure (as we do not find out who killed Julia until the end). Although I have written that ‘ The Speckled Band’ is more gripping, ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ also creates suspense. Roald Dahl does this by writing little phrases which show that they might have suspicion that it is Mary.

`Personally, I think it’s right here on the premises. ` Is an example of this. The author of `The Speckled Band` does it differently, his method is to not give the mystery away until the end. As I wrote earlier on in this essay, Watson narrates `The Speckled Band. ` He does not know everything about the investigation and therefore asks Sherlock questions. This means we get two points of view; Sherlock Holmes and Doctor Watson.

In ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ we only get one point of view; Mary’s. Although there are other characters in the story, their parts are not big enough to give an influential point of view. Because of this, it can also make the reader want Mary to get away with the crime as the author has followed her reactions and movements so we get close to her. A strong similarity that these two stories share is that they both contain a twist at the end, although they are very different, and one more subtle than the other.

In `Lamb to the Slaughter` the twist is that they eat the lamb, this is humorous and very clever. In `The Speckled Band`, the small twist is revealing the murderer and how he did it, as it is complicated and there is a high chance that the reader could not work it out on their own and also Dr Roylott is killed which is very unexpected. I think the twists affect the readers in a positive way because if it is a predictable ending the reader will feel disappointed as they have been in suspense. Although the endings are very important in a story, I think the titles also have to be impressive as it is the first thing that the reader sees. I think these to titles are very clever as they do not give anything away, this is intriguing.

I think that the best one is ‘ Lamb to the Slaughter’ as this explains to us that it is about a murder, where as the ‘ Speckled Band’ could be on any topic. The final comments in each story are diverse. In `Lamb to the Slaughter`, Mary is giggling at the detectives (with this readers are left thinking about how she got away with the crime) where as Sherlock says `I am no doubt indirectly responsible for Dr. Grimesby Roylott’s death, and I cannot say that it is likely to weigh very heavily upon my conscience` (with this the readers are left satisfied, knowing that good has overcome evil. ) Although this is not as humorous as Mary’s final comment it does not land on a sad note.

The endings show that attitude towards murder and crime has changed over time, as the modern story is able to laugh at the failure of the detectives. I really enjoyed both stories for a number of reasons, but my favourite was `The Speckled Band`, this is because it has a more complex storyline which kept me enthralled with its subtle clues and stereotypical characters. But I was fond of the humor in `Lamb to the Slaughter` as Mary attempted to outwit the dim detectives. I also feel that `The Speckled Band` was more compelling, once again because of the suspense Sir Arthur Conan Doyle creates.

In conclusion I have found many differences between these two stories, although similarities can be found. The main differences have been between Roald Dahl’s unpredictable, female villain and average policemen, contrasting against Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s stereotypical, evil Dr Roylott and the super-human hero; Sherlock Holmes. But most of the dissimilarities are because of the time difference, as acceptable characters and storylines have dramatically changed since the 19th century. An example of this is; Sir Arthur Conan Doyle’s murderer is a violent man as Roald Dahl’s Mary Maloney would not be accepted.

Also Sherlock Holmes catches the criminal as the Victorians would see it as unacceptable for evil to prevail. Another distinction is the language, `The Speckled Band’ is written with deep description and detail as this shows Conan Doyle’s intellectual ability. Roald Dahl has shown modern times by breaking all the rules that Sir Arthur has applied in his writing like the ones stated above. But the old fashioned murder mystery and the unique, modern story both successfully grasped me, so that I felt the sorrow and satisfaction, the absurdity and the apprehension.